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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

thing, long ready for death, was dead. Let some poet—or perhaps a number of poets in a number of arts—stab with laughter or scorch with tears the rotten hulk of war, and suddenly the world will know that war is dead.

H. M.

MUST ART BE INTERESTING?

Implicitly all interesting things have beauty, and the most interested person is no doubt the most esthetic. Such a thesis is not hard to support on the ground that interest can relate only to things of immediate worth and beauty. But to travel from this rather nervous doctrine of values to the position that beauty is determined by the interest it arouses is another and more complex matter. Though Ford Madox Hueffer in his recent *Thus to Revisit* reiterates charmingly, and with convincing disregard for the logical responsibilities of his theme, that art must be interesting, the shadow of an unsolved problem rather obscures the result. He rests his proposition, it is true, on human impulse, not on philosophical consideration; but the question is not easily confined. In that speculative periphery of art where beauty dissolves into metaphysics no problem is more persistent.

As a weapon against the absolutism in art which makes no compromise with the public taste the book will be effective. It undermines this stern and puritan dogma with the suggestion that final values in art as well as in other fields of human experience lie after all in human

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nature itself. It abandons the rigorous heaven reserved by the absolutists for the saved few, and returns frankly to popular interest for its standard. To their ascetic practice in casting off mundane and popular interests it can oppose the Protagorean formula, "Man is the measure of all things." But in liberating art from these moralisms Mr. Hueffer imposes another moralism in his repeated dictum, "Art must be interesting." Why after all must these highly complex things, art and interest, always be associated? That interesting things, as a matter of descriptive fact, are in a measure beautiful does not imply that art, as a matter of moral or artistic imperative, must be interesting. Mr. Hueffer rather increases than diminishes the speculative difficulties and enticements of the problem.

Overburdened beauty carries many theories on its back. All of them, from absolutist to pragmatist, aim in some way to find a functional value of beauty in the social system. The mere act of erecting a rational theory about it indicates an effort to organize beauty into a system of human relationships. There remains to remark, no doubt, that beauty is not a theory, that it is not subject to theorizing, that it needs and possesses no justification in the social order. But that too in its way is incorrect. In this field rich with questions Mr. Hueffer's interesting book quite appropriately asks what it cannot answer.

Baker Brownell